



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former AmeriCorps Executive Director Sentenced to 14 months in Prison

A former Executive Director of the American Samoa Special Services Commission (Commission) was sentenced yesterday to 14 months in prison for her role in stealing over \$325,000 in AmeriCorps grant funds, and was ordered to make full restitution of that amount.

Mine S. Pase, 63, of Pago Pago, American Samoa, was sentenced to 14 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, by U.S. District Judge Reggie B. Walton for the District of Columbia. In November of 2011, Pase pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal information charging her with conspiracy to commit theft of federal funds.

According to court documents, between approximately March 2001 and October 2010, Pase served as the Commission's Executive Director. As an agency of the American Samoa government, the Commission administered community-based programs and services for the benefit of the people of American Samoa, including youth literary programs, youth computer training, conservation activities, and family counseling. The Commission relied exclusively on AmeriCorps program grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service (Corporation), a federal agency established to fund volunteer community projects throughout the nation. From approximately January 2007 through October 2010, the Commission received a total of \$9,416,698 in AmeriCorps grant funds.

Pase admitted that she arranged for herself, Commissioners, Commission staff and others to receive federal grant funds for their personal benefit. According to court documents, Pase and her staff received payments of \$109,532 in federal grant funds for purported business trips that Pace and the others did not take. Among them were falsified trips to the mainland for Corporation sponsored conferences, such as the 2010 National Conference on Volunteering and Community Service in New York City, and a 2009 Leadership Development Conference in Arlington, Virginia. In addition, Pase, Commissioners, and Commission staff received approximately \$78,889 in federal grant funds to pay for vacation trips to Apia, Western Samoa, and separately spent \$89,313 on meals for the Commission's staff. Pase also arranged for her and her family members to receive \$28,009 as payment for office space used by Commission programs, and Pase's daughter received \$19,665 as payments under a bogus "lease agreement" for her vehicle, when in fact Pase owned and controlled the vehicle.

The case was prosecuted by the Edward J. Loya Jr. of the Department of Justice's Public Integrity Section of the Criminal Division, based on an audit and investigation by the Corporation's Office of Inspector General and the FBI. As a result of the findings of the OIG audit and investigation, the Commission's Corporation funding was terminated and was forced to shut down. Deputy Inspector General Ken Bach said:

“I would like to thank the auditors and investigators of my office who uncovered this theft of AmeriCorps grant funds, as well as the FBI and prosecutors in the Public Integrity Section for the efforts they made to pursue this case in this distant location. Our office is committed to protect the Corporation’s AmeriCorps program dollars from theft and ensure that those dollars are used only for the communities for which they were intended to help.”